

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☒ no ☐

Property Name: Wigwam Inventory Number: CH-797  
Address: 2805 Crain Highway Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no  
City: Waldorf Zip Code: 20604-0738 County: Charles  
USGS Quadrangle(s): Piscataway  
Property Owner: Wigwam LLC Tax Account ID Number: 061451  
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 58 Tax Map Number: 8  
Project: US 301 Waldorf Area Transportation Improvements Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration  
Agency Prepared By: Parsons Brinckerhoff  
Preparer's Name: Renee S. Novak Date Prepared: 4/8/2008  
Documentation is presented in: 2003 Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) form completed by the Charles County Planning Department  
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ☐ Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended  
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G  
*Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:*  
Name of the District/Property: \_\_\_\_\_  
Inventory Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no  
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

**Description:**

The Wigwam, also known as Wall's Bakery, is located at 2805 Crain Highway along the historic U.S. 301 corridor near Waldorf, Maryland. The structure is situated on an approximately 2.5-acre lot that is oriented southeast-northwest and faces directly onto U.S. 301. The property is bordered by commercial businesses to the northeast and southwest, a moderately forested area to the northwest, and U.S. 301 to the southeast. The building is set on a level, open lot with patches of shrubs and landscaping on the northwest elevation and east side near U.S. 301. For the purposes of this assessment, the Wigwam is being evaluated as an individual resource. The period of significance for the structure is 1950 to 1968.

The Wigwam was constructed in 1950 and is of concrete block construction. The main body of the building has a low-pitched, sloping shed roof with wings flanking both sides of the façade. The most notable feature on the building is the round-shaped conical structure that extends beyond the roofline and visually dominates the front façade. This feature is known as the "teepee" and is clad in vinyl siding. A portion of the front façade is also sheathed in vertical wood siding with a Formstone kneewall on either side of the teepee. A two-story, front gable structure is situated at the center of the footprint. Several shed additions are also

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended ☐

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

MHT Comments: *Despite somewhat compromised integrity, Wigwam is a rare representative example of mid-20th century "brogie" architecture.*  
*Tris Johnson*

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Date

(Google)

Reviewer, National Register Program

Date

200802868

CH-797

Wigwam

Page 2

present on the building. Three entranceways are located on the front elevation. A grassy area is located directly in front of the teepee where an original circa 1950s carved totem pole once stood. The property appears vacant and the northeast yard is closed off with a chainlink fence.

The Wigwam exhibits other architectural features such as wide, overhanging roof eaves with exposed rafters that extend over the concrete patio below, brick dentils over concrete block on the façade, and an original 1950s neon sign that is detached from the main structure and is located on the front of the property near U.S. 301. This sign is comprised of three parts depicting a Native American theme with a man shooting a bow and arrow, a decorative teepee, and a burning fire. The sign is no longer in operation.

#### History:

The land on which the Wigwam currently sits was once two parcels comprising a series of different lots. Parcel #1 refers to the northeast portion of the property where the building is located. It was originally owned by Francis W. Hill and consisted of Lots 21 and 26. In the early 1940s, the lots were sold to members of the Vernon family who in turn sold the parcel to the Alpha Corporation in the 1950s. It is believed that the Alpha Corporation built the current structure to function as a nightclub and casino during the slot machine-era in Charles County, Maryland. After Joseph and Shirley Goldstein's ownership between 1957 and 1958, the property came under the ownership of Waldorf Inc. of Delaware. Thirteen years later, the Wigwam Motors company acquired the building.

The Walls family bought the property in 1974 to house their gift shop and popular "Wall's Bakery" that was known for its world-famous éclairs. The Walls expanded their property in 1988 by acquiring a second parcel, a lot to the southwest of the building. Parcel #2 was sold by Metrah Swindell and Virginia Swindell, who purchased the property in 1967. Prior to 1967, the property was under the ownership of Robert and Mary Shelton who had bought the land from the Juster family in 1954. George and Crystal Walls, heirs to the Walls enterprise, continued to operate the bakery on these premises until 2005.

Commercial development greatly increased along the U.S. 301 corridor in the years following World War II. The boom in the Charles County roadside lodging and entertainment business came when the U.S. 301 Potomac River Bridge was constructed in 1940. As a result of the expansion of U.S. 301, new pathways opened between Baltimore and Virginia. In the mid 1950s, traffic on U.S. 301 became so heavy that the road was dualized. "Motels and restaurants sprang up to accommodate tourists, sportsmen and others who passed through or stopped in Charles County." Motels and other tourist/entertainment facilities came after the county successfully marketed the Charles County strip along U.S. 301 as offering the best business potential on the highway between Maine and Florida.

From 1949 to 1968, the casino and gaming industry flourished along the U.S. 301 corridor. Slot machines were a huge tourist attraction for motels and other businesses along this route. In 1949, slot machines were legalized and could be found in almost any bar or restaurant along the strip of U.S. 301 referred to as "Little Vegas". This strip refers to a swath of highway along U.S. 301 located south of the intersection between U.S. 301 and MD Route 5. Back in its heyday, this area once buzzed with nightlife, 24-hour diners, movie theaters, bright lights, live music shows, and famous performers. In fact, Maryland had three times as many federally licensed gambling devices as Nevada. Finally, in March 1963, after years of struggle and turmoil surrounding the presence of slot machines in Charles and Prince George's Counties, the state legislature voted to freeze new slots licenses and ultimately phase out all slot machines by July 1, 1968. This action had a permanent negative impact on the motel and entertainment industry along the corridor.

Perhaps the most popular form of Wigwam-inspired architecture during the early to mid-twentieth century came from Frank

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D Considerations: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Redford's "Wigwam Village" in Horse Cave, Kentucky. Constructed in 1933, Redford was an early motel entrepreneur who capitalized on the burgeoning roadside motel industry. Hoping to lure more customers, he created a unique business product that utilized an Indian architectural motif combined with "teepee" motel construction. Redford's originality in motel design expanded to several other states throughout the South and Southwest, with a total of seven operating motels completed by 1950. However, after failing to establish a corporate chain years later, the Wigwam Villages eventually ceased to operate as motels.

#### Significance Evaluation:

The Wigwam is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. While U.S. 301 was an entertainment corridor with supporting restaurants and lodging, substantial changes to the property and a change in use from casino to bakery in the mid 1970s have diminished the characteristics of novelty roadside architecture that were an interesting pattern along the roadway. The property no longer conveys a sense of the entertainment corridor that comprised portions of U.S. 301. Integrity of setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling resulting from alterations to the property have altered the character-defining features of the property that were associated with the mid-century tourist boom in the area. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion A.

Historic research, including deed research, indicates that the property has no known association with significant or important persons who have made specific contributions within a regional or national context. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion B.

The Wigwam is also not eligible under Criterion C, although the building's remaining unique features yield limited insight into popular roadside-themed architecture of the early to mid-twentieth century. Although it originally was an intriguing piece of roadside architecture in Maryland, the main building and landscape have been altered since its initial construction in 1950. Shed additions exist on the southwest elevation, and the original 1950s wooden totem pole has been removed from the premises. While the original Wigwam displayed unique and playful architectural elements, subsequent changes to the property resulting in diminished integrity of setting, materials, association, feeling, and workmanship have compromised the property's original design intent. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion C for architectural significance.

The Wigwam was not evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D as part of this evaluation.

#### WORKS CONSULTED

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Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland: A History. La Plata, MD: Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

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Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers. The Motel in America. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1996.

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D Considerations: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

CH-797

Wigwam

Page 4

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<[http://www.chesapeakelifemag.com/index.php/cl/features\\_article/fe\\_little\\_vegasjmj07/](http://www.chesapeakelifemag.com/index.php/cl/features_article/fe_little_vegasjmj07/)> accessed March 2008.

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Southern Maryland Studies Center. Charles County Community College, Southern Maryland Studies Room. Vertical Files and Library. 2008.

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

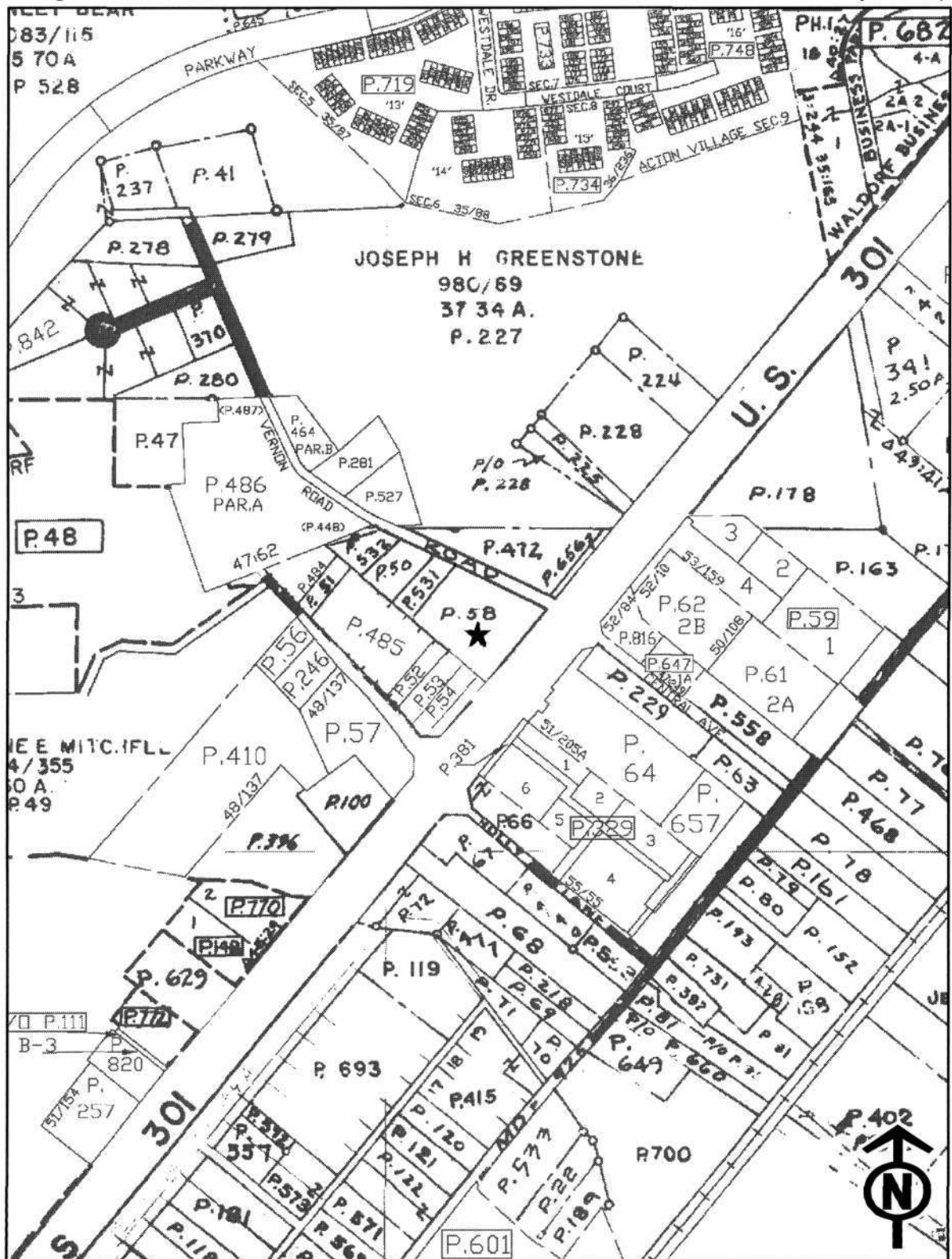
Criteria:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    Considerations:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    \_\_\_ E    \_\_\_ F    \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



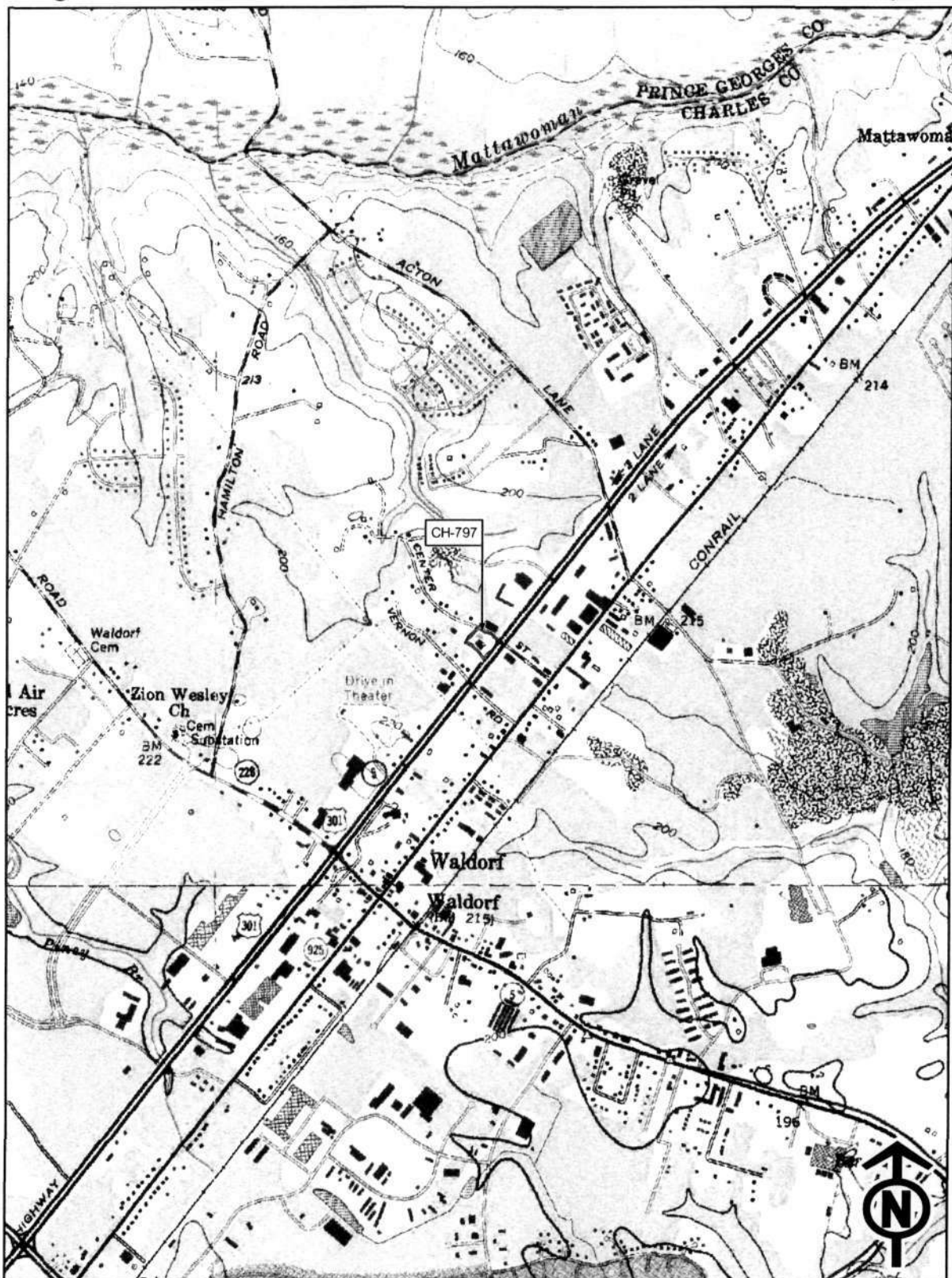
## Wigwam



0 500 Feet 1:6,000

# Wigwam

Wigwam (CH-797)  
2805 Crain Highway  
Waldorf, MD 20604-0738  
USGS Piscataway Quad



0 1,000 Feet

1:24,000



CH- 797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renée S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

view of the east elevation, looking northwest

# 1 of 4





CH-797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renée S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

view of the east elevation and the original  
1950s neon sign

# 2 of 4



CH-797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renee S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

view of the south elevation and parking lot

#3 of 4





CH- 797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renee S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

view of the east elevation and parking lot  
from across U.S. 301

# 4 of 4

**CH-797**  
**Wigwam**  
**Waldorf**  
**Private**

**c. 1950**

Built in 1950, the Wigwam including the structure, a decorative wooden totem pole, and a neon sign that accompanies the site, is the most intact former casino in Charles County and the best surviving representation of the slot-machine era. Built to evoke American Indian culture of the Midwest, the building represents the whimsical roadside architecture of the 1950's and 60's. In 1949, Charles County legalized gambling, and casinos began to appear along Crain Highway where they were readily accessible from Baltimore and Washington, DC. Along with the casinos came restaurants, cocktail lounges, and motels. Gambling became such an important business in Charles County that at one point a full quarter of the county's revenue derived from slot machines. After slot machines were banned in Charles County in 1967, the area's popularity as a travel destination deteriorated.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-797

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Wigwam

other

### 2. Location

street and number 2805 Crain Highway not for publication

city, town Waldorf vicinity

county Charles

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Wigwam

street and number 2805 Crain Highway telephone 301-843-0187

city, town Waldorf state MD zip code 20604-0738

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 8/58

city, town La Plata liber 364 folio 256

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report  
☐ Other

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) <input type="checkbox"/> structure <input type="checkbox"/> site <input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private <input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade <input type="checkbox"/> defense <input type="checkbox"/> domestic <input type="checkbox"/> education <input type="checkbox"/> funerary <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> health care <input type="checkbox"/> industry	<div> <div> landscape recreation/culture religion social transportation work in progress unknown vacant/not in use other:               </div> <div> Contributing 1  Noncontributing  buildings sites structures objects Total               </div> </div> <div> Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory 0           </div>

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## 7. Description

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Inventory No. CH-797

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Erected circa 1950, the Wigwam is Charles County's best-preserved casino built during the slot machine era in southern Maryland. Today, serving as a popular bakery and gift shop, the building stands on roughly 2 1/2 acres on the northeast side of Crain Highway in Waldorf. The building's most notable feature is the teepee- which consists of a round shaped conical shape with a center structural support. While the teepee is the dominant visual element, the main block of the building includes sloping shed wings projecting from either end. The roof has a very shallow pitch with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The building is of concrete block construction and the façade is sheathed in vertical board siding with a formstone knee wall. The building includes several shed additions including a large two-story front gable structure used as a residence. Enhancing the American Indian theme, the site includes an original circa 1950 wooden carved "totem pole" that stands near the entrance and the block on the façade is painted to mimic American Indian design.

An original 1950 neon sign stands in front of the building next to Crain Highway. The sign has a three part composition and depicts an American Indian theme with an Indian in western dress poised to shoot an arrow northward in a straight horizontal line. In the center is a teepee and on the northern edge is a representation of a burning fire.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-797

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

<b>Specific dates</b>	circa 1950	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	unknown
<b>Construction dates</b>	circa 1950		

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register ☐ Maryland Register ☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Built in 1950, the Wigwam including the structure, a decorative wooden totem pole, and a neon sign that accompanies the site, is the most intact former casino in Charles County and the best representation of the slot-machine era. Built to evoke American Indian culture of the Midwest, the building represents the whimsical roadside architecture of the 1950's and 60's. During the 1940s and 1950s, an important entertainment industry grew up along Crain Highway. One of the most influential of the entertainment industries that developed in the county was gambling. Illegal gambling had existed in Charles County and the rest of southern Maryland for centuries. However, the first slot machines were brought to the area in the 1930s in preparation for the tercentenary celebration of the landing of the Ark and the Dove. The first of these "one-armed bandits" were installed in stores and hotels mostly in St. Mary's County. Charles County soon followed their lead by placing slot machines at Chapel Point and Cobb Island. In 1949, Charles County legalized gambling, and casinos began to appear along Crain Highway where they were readily accessible from Baltimore and Washington, DC. Along with the casinos came restaurants, cocktail lounges, and motels. Gambling became such an important business in Charles County that at one point a full quarter of the county's revenue derived from slot machines. After slot machines were banned in Charles County in 1967, the area's popularity as a travel destination deteriorated. The construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge offered Washingtonians ready access to Maryland's ocean side resorts, draining the tourism trade out of southern Maryland. The largest casinos included the Wigwam, the Stardust and the Waldorf Hotel. Stardust was recently demolished, and the Waldorf Hotel has been significantly altered from its original form.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. CH-797

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 2.64

Acreage of historical setting 2.64

Quadrangle name Piscataway

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 8, Parcel 58.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Cathy Hardy/Historic Sites Surveyor

organization Charles County Planning

date 2/19/2003

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

city or town La Plata

state MD zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville MD 21032  
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 1

Inventory No. CH-797

Wigwam

name of property

Charles County, MD

county and state

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**Major Bibliographic References:**

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*.  
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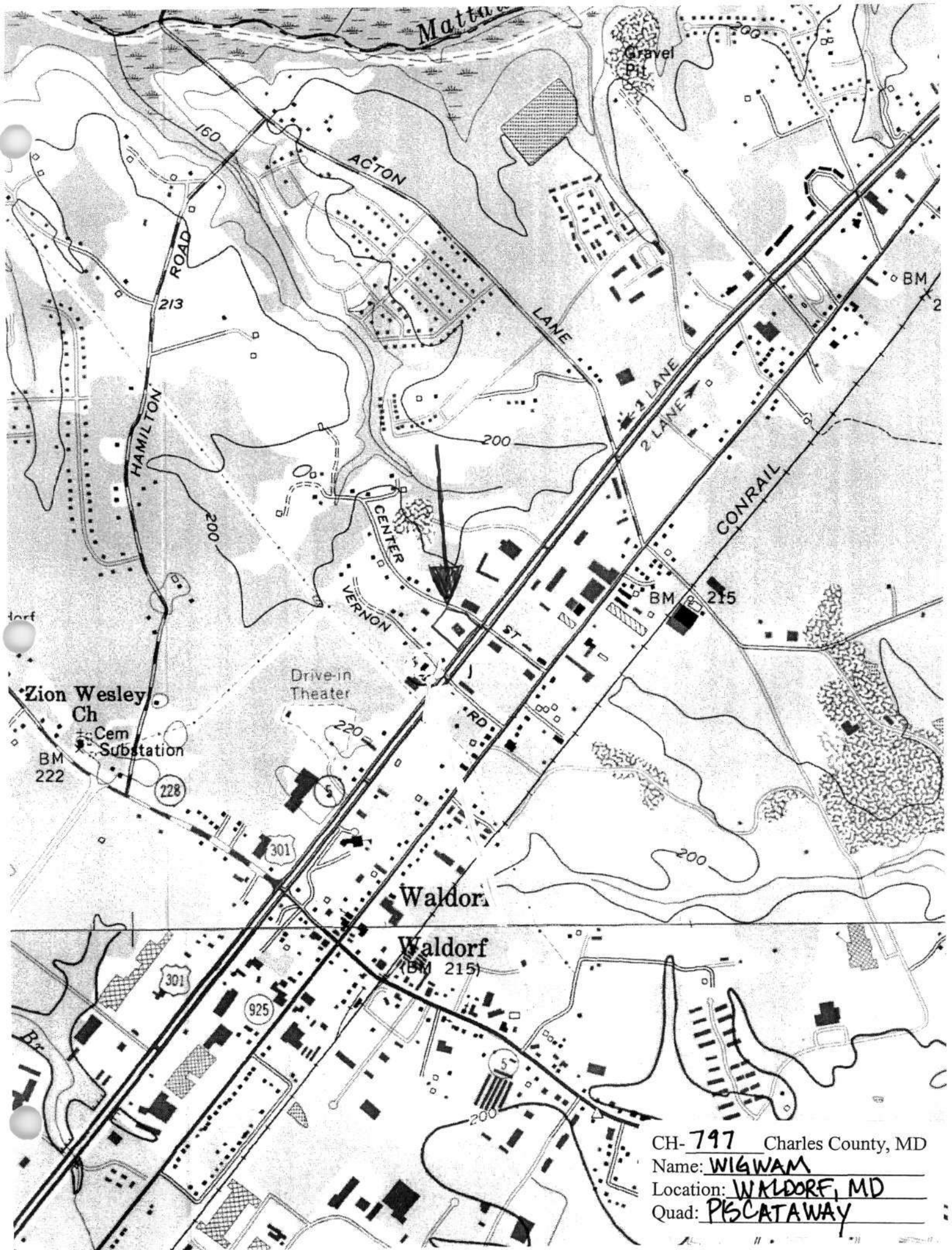
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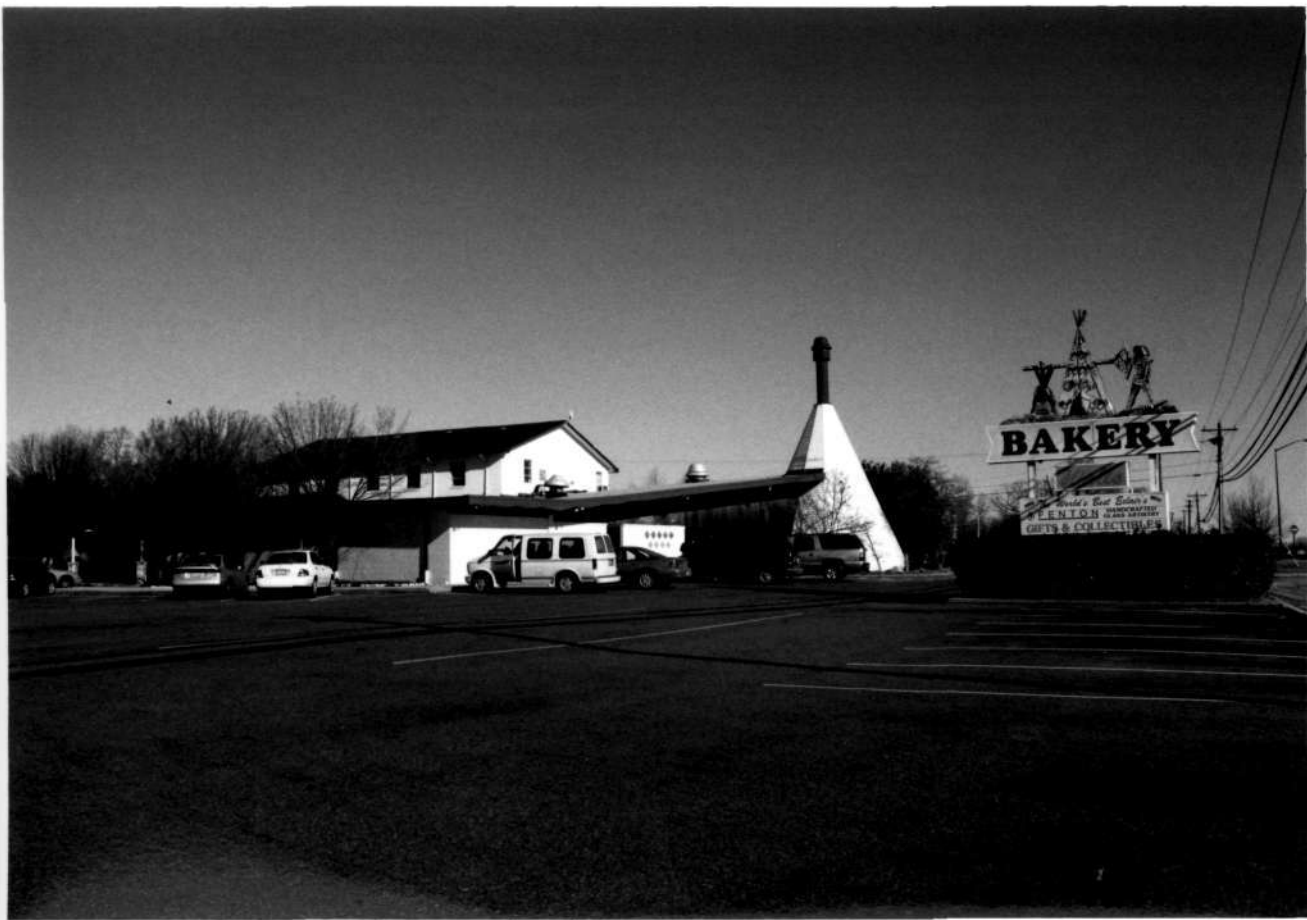


CH-797 Charles County, MD  
Name: WIGWAM  
Location: WALDORF, MD  
Quad: PISCATAWAY





CH-797  
WIGWAM  
Waldorf, MD  
1/2004  
C. Hardy  
MD SITPO  
LOOKING N  
10F3



CH-797

WIGWAM

Waldorf, MD

1/2004

C. Hardy

MD SITPO

LOOKING N

20P3



CH-797  
WIGWAM  
WALDORF, MD  
1/2004  
C. HARDY  
MD SHPO  
LOOKING EAST  
30F3